



DARKWOOD

In a certain part of Poland is a forest which sprang into existence seemingly overnight, after a strange meteorological event was sighted in the night sky. The inhabitants were helpless to escape as they were soon walled in by the rapidly growing trees, which sprouted before their very eyes and grew deep into the earth. Their radios failed to work, producing only static and the vague sound of voices. And those who lived on the land soon began to succumb to a strange illness; those who didn't die went insane, fleeing naked into the woods while ranting and raving.

It was as if the very land was cursed. Those who retained their sanity found that the soil was no longer hospitable to most crops. It seemed that the only thing capable of growing now was grass, the trees keeping them prisoner, and patches of poisonous mushrooms. Still, a sizeable number of people have managed to survive in this place.

Their plight has not gone unnoticed; soldiers and specialists have made several forays into the dark woods. Deemed "Outsiders" by the locals, their goal is primarily to monitor the situation, rather than trying to aid or extract survivors. As of today, most of the Outsiders who haven't been killed have been evacuated from the Darkwoods.

But you weren't so fortunate. Good luck.

YOU HAVE 0 REPUTATION.

GAUNTLET RULES

- For the duration of the Gauntlet all external perks, items, etc. from other documents are disabled. This includes the Warehouse, but not the Body Mod-Wings, if you have them, have a few additional rules at the end of the document. If you die, you move onto the next Jump sans the purchases made here.
- You start with 0 Reputation (CP) and must take drawbacks to purchase things.
- The Gauntlet can end in a few different ways. The first is that you must simply Survive one hundred days in the Darkwoods- which is no easy feat, as the inhabitants will likely become more and more desperate as food sources dwindle. The second is that you must somehow find a way to Escape- nigh impossible normally, but you may pull it off if you're clever enough. The third is to Discover the source of this whole mess, and do what you will with it.
- Certain options may not be taken when this document is used as a Gauntlet or a regular Jump. Options which can only be taken when playing in Gauntlet mode are **purple**. Options which can only be taken in Jump mode are **green**. These colors also show when certain conditions apply only to one mode.
- If you do not wish to use this document as a Gauntlet you may choose to take this as a normal Jump. Normal Jumpchain rules will apply and you will gain 1000 Reputation to spend as normal. Keep in mind that this means death will end your Chain and that you will stay in this world for ten years; there are many dangers here, and the visible ones may be the least threatening to your health. You will also lose out on any special rewards for completing the Gauntlet.
- Regardless of the above choice, you will start in a hideout in the Dry Meadow- the other areas, in increasing order of difficulty, are the Silent Forest, Old Woods, and the Swamp. A Village can also be found somewhere in the Silent Forest.



DRAWBACKS

NO DRAWBACK LIMIT. TAKE AS MANY AS YOU CAN HANDLE.

GREATER STRUGGLES WILL RESULT IN GREATER REWARDS, AS WELL...

The Plague (+0 Rep/-300 Rep to keep, Mandatory Gauntlet Mode)- Like many of the unlucky souls who live in this forest you have been infected with a strange illness; in this case, you seem to have been infected with a strain that's remarkably similar to the one that the Stranger has. There are a few benefits to this affliction, though there are also a few drawbacks. You no longer need to eat, drink, or sleep (though you can be knocked out), instead craving the red mushrooms that grow around the forest and other hallucinogens, such as the flesh of particularly mutated animals and people. These mushrooms are poisonous normally, but may be cooked to create a serum that will sustain and mutate your body in beneficial ways- though it may also weaken your body and mind at the same time. In addition, eating or drinking can have a positive effect on your health, your body gaining stamina or other benefits like enhanced sight or toughness. Furthermore, your body greatly benefits from medicines, healing your body rapidly when used; even bandages will help your body knit itself together, being absorbed into your skin. Your body is also tougher and stronger; you could be mauled by some of the wildlife here and walk it off and break through furniture with a few swings from a wooden board. However you are also uglier, turning a sickly gray with a zombie-like appearance and losing most of your hair. The Darkwoods have a way of playing tricks on those who are sick, showing them images from the past- theirs and other people's- as well as otherworldly hallucinations. Perhaps the most deadly problem you will face is that the forest itself wishes to claim you; being outside at night for too long outside of the protection of a hideout with its fumes will result in the ground itself churning beneath your feet in an attempt to swallow you whole, and if you are in close contact with the trees or even the ground for too long you will soon find bark growing over you. You have a deep desire to find and follow the road "home", wherever that is. Finally, you are completely mute. Communication with others will likely be more difficult, but at the same time being quiet is often the wisest course of action. Both the benefits and the downsides of this drawback will disappear after the Jump is over like a normal drawback, **though paying 300 Rep will allow you to keep the beneficial effects. This fee is waived in Gauntlet mode if you win.**

+The Thirst (+100 Rep)- You have one additional side-effect that the Stranger does not; although you may still go without food or rest, each day as night starts to fall you must drink some water from one of the various wells scattered around the forest. While this may not sound so bad, many of the wells are in a state of disrepair- or have run dry- which may make retrieving water difficult. If you fail to do so, then by midnight you will find yourself rapidly dehydrating which will likely result in your death without constant healing to replenish yourself.

+Vocal (-100 CP)- If going without the ability to speak is too much for you to bear, then you may choose to pay 100 CP to regain your voice. Though, this may be more trouble than it's worth with some of the people here, egotistical or insane- or both- as they may be. So watch your tongue, or you may just lose it again.

Shadows (+100 Rep)- The nights here bring many terrors with them. But if the constant threat of being attacked by marauding savages, packs of wild dogs, and worse wasn't enough, then this will ensure that you have some added danger to your stay here. At night there is a chance that strange, wraith-like beings will appear around and even inside of your hideout. These dark wisps will smother the lights around your shelter, temporarily short-circuiting any lamps or other lights and even extinguishing fires. They will do this for all the sources of light nearby save for one- and once you're in the dark, they'll start their attack, flying through your body and leaving heavy lacerations. They can only be held at bay by the light; either the one remaining light that they have left for you, or a portable source of light such as a flashlight, torch, or flares, though since the attack will last for several hours these methods might not be as reliable as a more permanent, longer-lasting fixture.

Noisy (+100 Rep)- Your feet might as well be made of lead with how much noise you seem to make from simply walking around. Whether it's creaky floorboards, dried grass, branches on the forest floor, or deep puddles, your feet seem to find the noisiest route to wherever it is you are going.

Dogged (+100 Rep)- The packs of wild dogs found in the forest find your scent to be very pleasing. Attacks by wild dogs will be much more common now, and while before you may have been able to prevent attack by backing off or throwing meat somewhere else they will now be too enticed by your smell to fall for such tricks.

+Meat (+300 Rep)- There is a hunter who stalks these woods; one with the face of a wolf. A misanthrope who hates the human inhabitants of this forest and is armed to the teeth, with a camp in every part of the forest that he can access. While before he may have been willing to treat with you as a fellow outcast despite your delicious scent, for the benefit of mutual gain if nothing else, your smell is now so similar to someone else from his past that he can no longer ignore his hunger. He will start to stalk you- and unlike the dogs, he is smart enough to use both traps and firearms. Combining the intelligence of a human and the savagery of a wolf, with all the experience of a person who has called these woods home for years, he will make a fierce and deadly opponent if you aren't prepared for him. If you evade him for long enough he may even unleash a pack of dogs to hunt you, knowing that having to share a few bites will be worth it if he can have the rest of you to himself.

Nightly Visitors (+100 Rep)- The forest is dangerous at the best of times, but at night this fact is made much worse. Now, this is made more apparent, as every night of your stay here your hideout is guaranteed to be visited by at least one hostile creature- possibly more, if you are unlucky- though they won't necessarily enter or search for you that hard. Thankfully this also seems to be limited to the monsters usually found in the area you're currently at, rather than risking the chance that you could encounter a Human Spider or a black Chomper on your first night in the Dry Meadow- but staying in an area too long will also increase the severity of the attacks, making it necessary to move on to another hideout before too long.

+Night Events (+200 Rep)- As if being under attack from physical threats wasn't bad enough, now it seems your hideouts are all situated in parts of the forest that are particularly susceptible to paranormal phenomena and strange environmental conditions during the night. Sudden earthquakes may shake loose the wires connected to your generator, suddenly shutting off the lights for several minutes; black fog may suddenly fill one of your rooms, choking all who stand in it; loud gales might suddenly force open your windows, and furniture may suddenly start to slide across the floor, seemingly guided as if to box you in. Less disruptive events, such as hearing loud whispering or having doors slowly open seemingly on their own, will also be more common than they might otherwise be.

Disreputable (+100 Rep)- The merchants who can still be found in the woods are surprisingly generous, given the scarcity of most resources- often willing to help out those who buy and sell from them with small gifts or discounts simply for surviving another night. No longer; like many, they now look out for themselves first, and others only when you have something they want. Not only will you be paying full price for their goods, but no matter what you've done for them in the past they won't change their greedy ways- meaning that any transactions you make will either have to be in their favor or completely neutral for both parties, with no regard to any "credit" you should have built up by trading with them in the past.

Fearful (+100 Rep/+300 Rep)- The forest is home to many people, but those who are weak of heart are often the first to succumb to it. Your nerves are on a razor's edge in this place, as if you're ready to bolt or attack at the first sign of trouble. While you may fight this feeling off, even in a fight, being hurt will make your brain feel this tenfold- resulting in a sort of tunnel vision for a few minutes or until the danger has passed. Not to mention that the constant fear is probably tiring- emotionally, if nothing else- even if you don't need sleep.

Barren Landscape (+100 Rep)- People have been living here, cut off from the outside world, for over a decade now. You can't really expect to find a lot of stuff just lying around. While you may not necessarily find less loot, you will have to work a lot harder for it. You won't find piles of lumber lying around, waiting to be scooped up; you'll have to cut down trees yourself. Nor will you find that long-abandoned houses have gone unscavenged- at least, not without becoming home to creatures that will guard their territory. Big caches may require specific keys rather than lockpicks, or may be rigged with traps to keep thieves out, and so on.

Stench (+100 Rep)- Rotting bodies. Rotting buildings. Rotting mushrooms. Everything rots here, and if you thought the smell was bad before you have another thing coming as this drawback will significantly worsen any and all bad smells that you might encounter during your stay. The smell seems to linger inside of your nose even in places that should be free of the aroma, and even turning off your senses or removing them entirely, such as through alt-forms, won't help get rid of the foul stench. Perhaps this is what the Wolfman smells all the time, the wretched soul.

Absolute Savage (+100 Rep/+200 Rep)- The deranged inhabitants of the forest have taken an interest in you; one that will likely cause you no small amount of trouble. From annoyances such as drawing symbols in the ground near your hideout or stealing your supplies after you've left to more deadly actions like forming raiding parties to kill or capture you for their strange rituals, there will be no end to them; almost as if the forest was spitting them out of the ground... Even if you somehow find a way to escape the woods they'll still find a way to bother you like this.

Swamped (+200 Rep)- Rain still comes to these dark woods, though it's rarer in some parts than in others. The event that created these woods in the first place also effected local weather patterns, leaving some sections almost entirely dry while others experience a constant deluge to create swamp land. However, now it seems like the rain is never-ending no matter where you are; even the "Dry Meadow" will only have clear skies every other day, and anywhere else will have much more frequent rainfalls- which combined with the unstable geography of the land means that these places will rapidly become swamp-like themselves, with even buildings being flooded. The clouds will block out the sun most days and the heavy downpours may obscure your vision further; not to mention that being constantly poured on is pretty miserable. Thankfully the areas in the swamp won't be affected by this even if rain is more common, nor will the stronger creatures found in the swamp appear in the other places affected by this drawback.

+Swamper (+300 Rep)- ...unless you take THIS drawback, too. Lizards don't seem to be that common to the area, though perhaps due to the forest's nature they've managed to gain a small, if sizeable population in the Darkwood. And unfortunately, the forest's unique properties have also given rise to this abomination- a roughly 10-feet long hybrid of man and reptile known as the Swamper that lurks in the waters of the swamp, much like a crocodile, preying on anything it can get its jaws on. It's fast on land and faster in the water, hits like a truck, and can even shoot a "web" of vines to hold its prey in place before it closes in for the kill. Thanks to the rain this apex predator can appear anywhere, even if it might not be able to use its favored tactic of submerging and waiting for prey to come near it.

Flight of the Banshees (+200 Rep)- Among the varieties of monsters found in the Darkwoods, the tall, crow-like Banshees are among the oddest. Like several other creatures found in the woods they are a hybrid of man and beast- birds, in this case- however, they exhibit several strange abilities that are unique to them. Staring at them will project the image of the Banshee's face into your mind, and their fast movement makes it easy for them to catch up to their prey; after which, they unleash a terrifying shriek, knocking out all of the lights nearby, immolating themselves, and creating their young from the ashes of their death. The last part happens even if a Banshee is killed, and while baby Banshees aren't that dangerous they can easily overwhelm someone with enough numbers. Normally they would be a rare sight in most parts of the forest; but now it seems like they've had a surge in the population for some reason. While they still prefer to attack at night, they often do so in pairs; and even during the daytime they can be found prowling about.

+Chomper's Feast (+300 Rep)- A bit of trivia about Banshees; it is said that early in the forest's existence, there were tales of Banshees who, rather than summoning their young, instead conjured Chompers. Chompers are one of the most common varieties of mutant in the forest, being made from a human body that appears to have been split nearly down the middle from the effects of the Plague; their bones forming scything teeth as the ghoulish creature lopes about on all fours. However, being common doesn't mean that they aren't deadly- especially since Banshees now have a 50% chance of summoning a group of 2-3 Chompers when they die.

Mushroom Party (+200 Rep)- Mushrooms. Delicious some times; deadly at others. This drawback will make both more common, though the latter in far greater abundance than the former. Fields of poisonous mushrooms have sprouted up all around the forest, fit to burst at the slightest touch, covering a larger area than they did before. Careful navigation is required to pass through these fields, though going around may be an option if you don't mind a longer route. But at the center of each field one can find the red variety of mushrooms; enough to fill a satchel or two if you take the time to harvest them all. If that's not enough it's not uncommon for savages, animals, and other people to die in the field trying to reach them, leaving a bounty for any scavenger... if you're better at avoiding danger than they are. Just watch out; some of those bodies may be infested with toxic mushrooms, which will still explode when disturbed. Even then, they may not be as dead as they appear...

Mushrooms on the Mind (+200 Rep)- Some people have taken on some oddly mushroom-like features as a consequence of the age-old adage: you are what you eat. Or, merely because they were "born" that way. You are one of them; in particular, you have a large cluster of mushrooms growing out of the top of your skull, sticking into your brain. While this isn't fatal or even uncomfortable these mushrooms are sought after by pretty much everyone in the forest. While most people won't leap to eating you right away, food is often scarce in these woods... and even if they stop at just the mushrooms, a missing skull isn't good for the brain.

Narrow-sighted (+200 Rep)- There are many hazards to be found in the dark woods; poisonous mushrooms littering the ground, bear traps, long falls into root-filled ravines; not to mention the creatures that like to lie in wait for prey. Unfortunately, your ability to detect these threats has taken a steep dive. You suffer from an unfortunate eye condition that makes your field of vision noticeably less wide; not to the point of being crippling, but enough to affect your ability to see things past a few dozen feet and even things that are up close, just a bit. Being wary and pacing yourself will go a long way towards avoiding something unpleasant now.

Shaky Hands (+200 Rep)- You might be able to hold a gun, but using it is a different story. Your hands have a tendency to shake when you aim, making it a lot harder to hit things- especially moving targets- and roughly doubling the chance that even a well-aimed shot will miss. Thankfully, this doesn't seem to apply to thrown items like Molotov cocktails, possibly due to the use of force needed to propel it.

Poison Vulnerability (+200 Rep)- While some of the poisonous mushrooms found in the forest can be made to benefit you, the majority of them- and some other plants- are just poisonous. And explosive, too, with stepping on a patch while unaware of their presence being one of the better ways to experience both of these things first hand as you are covered in toxic goo. Unfortunately, you are now roughly twice as susceptible to poison; one mistake might not kill you, but two without healing up first or using an antidote probably will.

Weakness (+200 Rep)- As if your current situation wasn't bad enough, it seems like your ability to deal damage has also been reduced. It may just be that the creatures here are tougher now, or maybe injecting so many strange things is harmful after all; whatever the reason, your melee weapons are a lot less effective now, taking roughly twice as many more blows to kill the creatures here than it should.

Nature's Ire (+200 Rep)- Some species have gone relatively unchanged by the plague; elk, rabbits, carrion birds like crows or ravens, even wild dogs, pigs, and chickens. But perhaps the mutations of these species have worsened, or maybe they sense the malignity inside of you; for whatever reason, normally non-aggressive or neutral animals will now attempt to attack or hinder you. Elks will attempt to gore you on sight, pigs will try to drag you down into the muck to feast on your flesh, and the birds may swarm around you in an attempt to peck you to death- with the smarter ones even leading enemies towards you. The rabbits, for their part, will simply become more elusive- depriving you of their valuable meat.

Get Out of Here, Outsider (+200 Rep)- Isn't it convenient that all the villagers in this rural, backwoods part of Poland happen to speak English? And that you can somehow read all the notes, magazines, and so on that have been left lying around? Well, not anymore- even if you could speak Polish before, you'll now find that the language everyone speaks and writes in is all but indecipherable; as if language itself has become jumbled up by the Plague. It might be possible to pick up a few phrases here and there, so communication isn't entirely impossible- but not being able to understand their language won't exactly help you win any favors or friends among the superstitious people here, even if you're already mute in the first place.

Infestation (+200 Rep)- Bugs, already an annoyance, have had their most annoying traits worsened by the plague. Although the carapaces of the larger ones make for good armor- a desirable trait considering they prefer to hide in their nests rather than confront intruders- these huge bugs have a habit of trying to start a nest in your hideouts and other property, even the Warehouse. Why is this bad, you may ask? Well, their larva are the bigger problem- wriggly maggots that number in the thousands, covering the floor like a massive rug, nipping and excreting acidic slime that slowly dissolves flesh. At that point, using fire to burn them out is the only way to remove them; the nests requiring the same, if you wish to preempt their breeding. Now, this will likely become a problem for you every few days as your hideouts and other properties become an attractive place for these bugs to live and breed in.

+Human Centipede (+200 Rep)- What's with that look? I'm speaking of the vile creatures native to the swamp; large centipedes capable of infesting human bodies, puppeting them around like costumes while digging through the earth at high speeds. Not only are they fast under the ground, but they're also fast above it as well- attacking with their long bodies to close the distance even more rapidly, lacerating with razor sharp mandibles. Although relatively fragile, their ability to burrow beneath your hideout and emerge from under your floorboards will make them unwelcome house guests, especially since they can now be found anywhere.

Weak Lungs (+200 Rep)- Your lungs seem to have become much weaker, possibly as a result of breathing in so many strange substances. You find yourself getting tired much easier during strenuous physical activity such as running or fighting, and take longer to recover when you've exhausted yourself as well.

Degradation (+200 Rep)- All of your stuff seems more fragile than it used to be. Weapons, even firearms, wear down from use quicker than they should, your traps are easier to escape from, and even your hideouts and barricades break more easily when they are assaulted. Repairing your items is still possible, but may require expensive or rare items if they're hard to create.

Anomalies (+200 Rep)- The woods have produced many strange things; however, the majority of them can be explained scientifically, or as mere hallucinations. However, at times one can encounter things that beggar the beliefs; ghosts dancing in meadows; strange lights that make your eyes bleed with only a glance; illusory attackers that leave real wounds. Such things are much more common for you now.

Dark Creatures (+300 Rep)- A strange substance can be found in the swamp; a dark, gooey, yet somehow insubstantial material that looks like shadows given form. It covers objects and even creatures, forming a type of "armor" that makes them impervious even to firearms until it is removed. Luckily, this is done easily enough with a source of light- the brighter, the better- and the substance is rare enough... only, now it seems to grow quickly at night, covering roughly half of the creatures that try to assault or otherwise enter your base regardless of where it is.

Aggressive Mutations (+300 Rep)- The mutations of the forest can vary wildly, but just like in nature some have become more common than others- almost as if they were a new species. But with this, much of the certainty in what you will encounter is gone as most creatures develop unique- and deadly- adaptations, sometimes mixing and matching traits among each other or even developing entirely new ones from out of nowhere. Those rabbits might look cute from a distance, but just wait until they split down the middle to try and tear your face off; to say nothing of what the already deadly creatures may develop into now. In general, this will make each and every encounter you have unique- and that much more deadly due to their unpredictability.

Shifting Land (+300 Rep)- The Darkwood is constantly changing, growing. Now the land is much the same, even more so than before. You may go out in the mornings only to find that your hideout is now in an entirely different part of the forest, or return after a long day to find that half of it has been demolished by an earthquake. Tunnels that may have once safely allowed you to traverse the landscape may cave in, or lead instead to underground nests of monsters. It is possible that you may stumble upon duplicates of other buildings, made entirely of mushrooms. Even the village may uproot itself one day, only to appear somewhere else. Basically, you shouldn't even bother with maps anymore because there's no telling what you'll find- or where it will end up.

Weak Regeneration (+300 Rep)- Before, your body had an almost miraculous ability to heal itself after taking damage. It still does, but the rate at which you heal has been greatly reduced, taking twice as long while also severely cutting down the total amount healed. You'll still be able to pop pills, use bandages, and drink to take away the pain- but relying on your ability to pull yourself together in a fight against even the weaker opponents here is probably a bad idea, as most of them will be able to outpace your body's regeneration.

Watch Your Step (+300 Rep)- Traps can be a homeowner's best friend here; softening up or even killing the enemies that try to invade your home before they ever get the chance to set foot through the front door. But the problem with traps is that they're indiscriminate- anything that steps in a bear trap is going to have a day, including yourself even if you're the one that put it there. Now, the landscape is littered with traps left by hunters or the more cunning savages; some out in the open, others covered with a layer of leaves or mushrooms to make them harder to spot. Although they're not usually deadly on their own- and might even be useful if you can trick an enemy into one, or if you can disarm it for salvage- getting your foot caught at the wrong time can easily be fatal if you're being pursued by something, even when it comes to the weakest enemies like dogs or savages. These traps range from old, rusty beartraps to pits filled with wooden spikes- but if you're exploring an abandoned building, make sure to watch out for tripwires and canisters of glass that might have been rigged to explode as well.

Bugmen (+300 Rep)- Humans and insects; two of the most pervasive things on this planet. Now, the forest has seen fit to merge them in greater numbers- hybrids of man and bug adding themselves to the number of creatures found throughout the woods. Mantises that hide among the trees, delivering crippling strikes with their scythe-like arms; bees with venomous stingers that sting anything that dares to get near them; spiders that lay traps and call out to their prey for help, and mosquitoes that hunt in packs, sucking grown men dry in a matter of moments... to say nothing of the vast snails that trample trees and building in their path, the worms that drag people beneath the ground, or the ants that are weak individually and powerful in numbers. The good news is that most of them are rather dumb, being insect-like in terms of intelligence as well- though some may be smarter than others...

Floor Gore (+300 Rep)- The flesh of the forest is everywhere beneath our feet, but it's only at night that it can break through the forest to breathe- and hunt. Now, the Floor Gore can appear at any time- even outside of the Darkwoods- rapidly pursuing you with the intention of devouring you whole, engulfing your body in its swirling, chaotic mass until nothing is left. The good news is that it's slower during the day, with greater light levels making it sluggish- it's even possible to make it give up its pursuit, if you can outrun it or keep it at bay long enough. But as dusk settles, you'll be forced into your hideout or Warehouse where the impossibly fast, seemingly omnipresent flesh cannot reach you- or else lose your life as it drags you kicking and screaming into the earth.

Infected World (+300 Rep)- This small section of land is no longer the only thing that has been contaminated. Now, the whole world has been claimed. Trees have sprouted up along the ocean floor, raising high enough to restrict sea travel; mushrooms have taken over skyscrapers in the biggest cities of the world; the genetics of all that lives and dies in this world has fallen under the sway of a higher power, to be modified and remixed into all manner of abomination, all at the hand of the presence which lurks in the heart of the woods. Combined with the spreading plague, and madness, the world has all but ended. And while this has not changed the location of the crash site, there is now truly no telling what you will encounter in this world; the beasts that emerge from the ground are not limited by mere geography, after all. **Taking this drawback in Gauntlet mode will remove the "escape" victory condition; since there is no escape.**

+Missing Source (+300 Rep)- As the above, with one detail changed- the strange light did not appear over this land, but somewhere else entirely. Where that is, exactly, is something that you will have to discover yourself: taking this drawback will lock off the "survival" method of completing this Gauntlet. The only way to win is to find the source of the forest- wherever it landed- and burn it down to the roots.

Aggressive Response (+300 Rep)- Before the government had only a small interest in the woods; for all that it represented a strange phenomenon, so long as it didn't spread it was more of a curiosity to be studied. The people who lived there may as well have already been dead, as far as they were concerned, and any personnel lost to the creatures or diseases were a small price to pay for the research they were doing. Now, though, the army has taken on a more aggressive approach; it isn't enough to send in a few teams or start a base camp, they seek to pull the forest's infection out by the roots. Unfortunately, they aren't the type to discriminate when choosing targets- anything alive is a potential enemy to be gunned down, no matter how much it begs. This drawback is somewhat of a mixed bag; on the one hand, you'll probably be able to find a lot more equipment from any dead soldiers. On the other hand, there are now roving bands of kill teams armed to the teeth who will be more than happy to put a bullet in you. **In normal mode, the governments of the world will quickly recognize your existence as being something similar to the source of the woods- an other-worldly presence- and will stop at nothing to hunt you down and kill you, seeing you as an existential threat to the whole world.**

Nothing for Nothing (+300 Rep)- There is no currency in this land; only a bartering system. You trade what you have for what you need, or for favors that you can call on later. Of course, some things are too valuable to be simply bought or sold. The location of a ruin that might have loot in it; the combination to an abandoned crate or safe that you've found in one of your hideouts; the whereabouts of a person you are searching for; a unique item. You will encounter roadblocks like these often, requiring you to go on what can only be described as "quests". "Bring me the key"; "find me the parts to build a rocket ship"; "bring my child back to me"; "kill these people"; these are all things that might be asked of you at one point or another. Alternate routes may be possible, though will likely require something similar.

Go to Sleep (+500 Rep)- You do not need to sleep. That doesn't mean that you don't want to. The longer you're here, the more your desire to sleep will grow. You can hold it off, but once a month has passed you will find it impossible to resist. You will dream pleasantly for the rest of your short life. This locks off the "survival" route and the "escape route" by necessity; you must find the source of these woods to have a chance of escaping this fate of everlasting slumber...

Nightmare Mode (+500 Rep)- If you die, rather than getting to continue your Chain you go home- no second chances, even if you've purchased and eaten the Embryo available in the items section. You'll have everything you've gained up until this point as you would if you had died in a Jump normally, though you won't have anything you purchased here.

Power Loss (+500 Rep)- I suppose if you want the Gauntlet experience without any of the actual rewards this might be the drawback for you, though you might want to question yourself on whether or not it might be worth it to just go through with the Gauntlet at this point. In any case, taking this drawback will seal off all of your out of Jump powers, perks, items, and so on as if you had decided to do Gauntlet mode-only, you won't have the protection of getting to continue with your Chain if you die, instead heading back home for good. Again, this includes the Warehouse but not the Body Mod. If you take this you're either very confident in your ability to survive for ten years, or you're damn near suicidal considering that even if you fly out you'll likely have a hard time escaping capture or execution considering how mutated individuals are usually dealt with, even if they're capable of reasoning with people.

PERKS

YOU GET TWO FREE 100 REP PERKS AND A DISCOUNT ON TWO 200 AND 400 REP PERKS.

Navigator (100 Rep)- You know how to find the lay of the land, which makes it much easier to discover major landmarks that make for great reference points when traveling. You're also good at reading the maps that other people have made and are even decent at making your own, which means that it's very hard for you to get lost so long as you take the time to mark out the various things you've discovered.

Efficient Packer (100 Rep)- When you really need to pack up and move one can fit a surprising number of things in their various pockets, pouches, and packs. Although you won't be able to make a shotgun fit into the same amount of space that a handful of pills would, you're very effective at packing supplies and can swap between different items that you are carrying on your person surprisingly fast.

Dodge (100 Rep)- The creatures here are terrifying, but they're not unkillable. Even the strongest ones can be bludgeoned to death with a shovel or hacked apart with an axe. The problem is that they're often so much faster than a human, often overwhelming their prey with their sheer brute force once they get close enough. Still, a skilled fighter can manage to dodge their charges, sneaking in blows until they've whittled their opponent down. It's probably not as safe as shooting them from a distance, but you've learned how to dodge like this pretty reliably.

Locksmith (100 Rep)- There are numerous crates and locked doors scattered around this place, the keys long since vanished- either into obscurity or into the very earth. Luckily, you have some experience with lockpicking, and can jimmy most basic locks open with just some wire. You're also a wiz at figuring out numeric combinations from the clues that people have left behind, if they haven't just left it lying around.

Scream (100 Rep)- Mute? Far from it; your voice is capable of being much louder than it probably should be for a person your size. While this is of dubious usefulness here, if you want to attract enemies to the sound of your voice than this will certainly be of use. But you also have a far more useful ability; once a day, you can scream loud enough to frighten even the meanest creatures found here due to the noise or pain- at least for a while. Though people might not be so easily cowed.

Eagle Eye (100 Rep)- Your eyes are sharper than most people's. Small details- tracks on the ground, a page torn from a journal, a trail of blood- are something that you're well-equipped to find, and you can see much further as well. In the dark you'll still need a torch or flashlight, but you'll be able to see much better there too.

+Third Eye (100 Rep)- Almost as if you have a third eye, you have a sort of "awareness" around your body. It's limited in scope- covering just a few feet around you- but with careful use you'll find that it can be quite handy when it comes to avoiding danger. Furthermore, once a day for about an hour you can expand your awareness greatly, giving yourself the equivalent of 360 degree vision.

Mushroom Healing (100 Rep)- Typically, the red mushrooms you find scattered around would need to be refined for their essence before being of any use to you. But like some of the creatures here it seems like your physiology has shifted to make some use of them at any time. Eating mushrooms will, much like taking pills, promote a rapid regrowth of your body's cells, regenerating wounds. While this may seem to be of little benefit compared to injecting them, if you reach the point where your ability to find mushrooms has outstripped your ability to refine them then this may provide a valuable source of healing. Works on all mushrooms post-Jump, though ones that are unusual in some way will provide greater healing.

+Appetite (100 Rep)- Strange appetites abound in the Darkwoods. Savages can often be found gnawing on trees, but there is some method to their madness as you will discover that your jaw is capable of gnawing through entire logs to provide a similar benefit to the above, or planks for a minor, but respectable healing boost.

Carrion Feeders (100 Rep)- The corpses of those who have been killed by the wildlife- or simply died from disease or starvation- litter the forest floor; food for the crows. But their loss is your gain, as said birds tend to "lead" you in the direction of corpses carrying useful items; perhaps by landing near them to feast, or flying away and attracting your attention when they sense your presence. These bodies will always have something of use on them, even if it's just an empty bottle; but if you're lucky you can find more useful materials, food or medicine, and even ammo.

+Carcass Salvage (100 Rep)- Of course, sometimes you'd rather not wait for someone to die before you loot them. Unfortunately, the savages and mutated creatures here typically have slim pickings; after all, they don't have any need for complex supplies. But now, you'll find that the things you kill are more likely to carry useful items. Savages carry things like medicine and ammunition more often, or even the rare weapon part, and even the mutants may carry things like good cloth from the scraps of their clothes or other remnants of their humanity- and perhaps they'll even have swallowed something useful from one of their victims.

Acid Blood (200 Rep)- Much like the toxic substance found in mushrooms your blood becomes acidic when exposed to the air, and has a habit of spraying when you are hurt. The result: anyone who takes a bite or swing at you is in for a bad time. The acid won't exactly melt them into a puddle of goo, not unless they're especially fragile, but it is painful, irritating, and might just turn the tide if you got hit in the middle of a fight.

Runner (200 Rep)- Even the most well-prepared explorer may run into unfavourable circumstances. From suddenly encountering a den of Chompers to staying out later than you intended, one must know when to go from slow and steady to racing for their life. Luckily, you're pretty quick on your feet; you know how to walk on different types of terrain to maximize your speed and you seldom, if ever, trip or fall even when you are in a full sprint. In addition, once a day for about an hour your body will be able to run at full speed without tiring itself out; "infinite stamina" in other words, but only in regards to running.

Moth (200 Rep)- The electric lights of civilization somehow soothe your tired mind and battered body; perhaps they counteract the feeling of the electricity thrumming through the soil and the branches above. Although the effect is slight, simply standing next to something like a lamp will calm you down, and even help your wounds start to heal- albeit slowly. But once a day you can greatly increase your body's healing ability when standing next to a light, sapping away excess electricity to fuel your body's healing.

Good Reputation (200 Rep)- You can't exactly go down to the corner store to buy groceries nowadays. Most people in the forest instead use a bartering system- which you seem to get pretty good deals from. Not only are you better able to hawk your goods and convince others to part from theirs more easily, but you also find that some people are willing to part with some minor things freely solely due to your reputation. They might want to help you, or maybe they're just impressed by what you've done; either way, it's more supplies in your pack at the end of the day.

Lucky Looter (200 Rep)- While some live in poverty here, others are sitting on a veritable mountain of supplies. Thankfully corpses can sit too; you have a habit of stumbling upon caches whose owners, for one reason or another (but mostly because they're dead), can't reclaim their property. The things you find tend to be of highest quality; weapon parts, ammo, medicine, tools, and other valuable items are common. As a bonus, you also tend to find Shiny Stones fairly often; they're of dubious usefulness, but the savages and villagers found here like to use them for religious purposes and even collectors enjoy their mesmerizing luster, which makes them ideal for trading and perhaps the closest thing to a currency here. Both of these things will apply to future worlds; though instead of Shiny Stones you'll probably just find wedding rings, gold nuggets and the like.

Improved Refinement (200 Rep)- Taking raw resources and turning them into something you can actually use is an important skill, one that's almost a necessity for those living here since there's no way to get stuff from outside of the forest. For you, refining raw materials tends to result in a little more than other people would get, and even salvaging traps and barricades will often give you more useful parts than you'd expect. An average-looking log might be unexpectedly strong, letting you make five thinner planks that are just as good as three regular ones from a normal log; or maybe a rusted beartrap will clean up surprisingly well, giving you more scrap to work with than it might have first appeared.

+Scarcity Ingenuity (100 Rep)- There may be times where, even with the ability to stretch your raw materials further, you may still have to make due with less than ideal supplies. After all, it's not like you can truck your entire stockpile around everywhere you go. Now, though, you'll be able to get through tough times like those easier since you understand how to make the most out of what you have. You can use less metal when improving your weapons, use fewer planks and nails when fortifying a building, etc. and all with no drop in quality.

More Essence (200 Rep)- Essence is the substance derived from mushrooms and other mutated objects found in the Darkwoods, which when injected can cause startling improvements to the human body- as well as some increasingly bad side-effects to go along with your increasingly good mutations. Whether you want to roll the dice or not you'll find that you are able to get more out of your mushrooms, strange meat, and other Essence sources- roughly double what you'd normally get. With the possibility that you'll find more advanced ovens and tools to extract more Essence anyways, this ensures that you'll have a rapid progression on your treatments. For better or for worse. Post-Jump you'll find that this works on "experience", as well as other similar forms of progression.

+Fewer Side-Effects (100 Rep)- You may wish to take away some of the anxiety that comes from injecting strange substances. With this, you'll find that the side-effects of using Essence- and other drugs, such as alcohol if you're the type that drinks moonshine from the bottle- have been reduced in severity. For example, it's possible that others who inject Essence might find that their sensitivity to poison has doubled, which would make stepping on a mushroom patch a death sentence without medical aid. But if you were to gain the same vulnerability, the effect would be much less severe; you would still get hurt worse than a normal person would, but not as badly as someone with the undiluted vulnerability. With alcohol, you might find yourself sobering up in just a half hour after getting drunk on moonshine.

Doctor (200 Rep)- If you're infected with the Plague, then you might think that there's no need for doctoring skills- after all, when you can stick a bandage on your chest and walk off nearly being disemboweled it sort of puts a damper on all that time spent studying. However, through careful experimentation- and perhaps not so careful experimentation- you have discovered several useful properties for the mushrooms found here. The first is that you can derive an antidote from them which can cure any poison; the second is that you can ferment rotted mushrooms to create a flammable, explosive gas which you might use to create traps. And of course you also have the skills that a doctor would have... even if the people here are beyond your expertise.

+Acolyte (100 Rep)- The forest is a harsh teacher, but one which can offer a bounty of knowledge and love if you are willing to accept its teachings. Having somehow obtained a deeper connection to the woods, you have combined both your conventional wisdom and the knowledge of those who have learned the ways of the forest to create something new. With a great amount of hallucinogens or rare Shiny Stones you can create "potions" which permanently enhance the body of those who drink them. Though, like with Essence injections there's a limit to how much you can enhance someone; roughly making them twice as strong as they used to be. Thankfully, this doesn't have the same issues that injecting Essence does, though the effects are more limited as well.

Time Freeze (400 Rep)- In the morning, at 8 AM precisely, you experience a strange phenomenon where the bright light of day vanishes the creatures marauding your home, as well as their dead, blinding you for a few moments. When your vision clears you find that the area around you- equivalent to the building you're in and about fifty feet beyond it- has taken on a grayer tone. So long as you don't stray beyond this area time will remain frozen allowing you to plan your next moves, craft items, trade or talk with anyone in your hideout, heal yourself, and even work on repairing your fortifications. This will continue to work in future Jumps though note that any hostile beings you may have deliberately kept in your base will not disappear and that if they take hostile action against you, the time stop effect will end. Also note that both travelling beyond the area of the time stop effect and sending anything outside of it- from missiles to radio signals- will also end the effect. Finally, since time is effectively frozen time spent in the time stop zone will not count towards the completion of a Jump or things along that line.

Morning Visitors (400 Rep)- Although it's true that civilization in on thin ice here in the forest, there are still a few individuals who have managed to eke out an existence for themselves by trading goods. Unfortunately, there's no guarantee that they'll take as much of an interest in you as they would the Stranger; strangers, ironically, are dangerous enough that they might not want to approach you. But now the various merchants found in the woods seem to have somewhat of an affinity for you, giving you great prices with some even making the trip to your hideout come morning solely to sell to you. Post-Jump you will find a strangely silent merchant waiting for you in your Warehouse, ready to sell you goods from the forest as well as a few odds and ends from your current setting. You will also find that other vendors will be naturally predisposed towards you, just like the ones here were.

Friend of the Forest (400 Rep)- One of the Plague's most common- perhaps even ubiquitous- symptoms is heightened aggression. Savages, dogs; even elk are known to become far more territorial, fighting to the death despite their injuries. For you though the animals found in the woods are much friendlier than they should be, infection or no. Although this won't work on the creatures with more human components- no matter how bestial they may appear- the dogs and elk won't mind your presence nearby, not attacking unless you strike the first blow. They may also follow you for a while, defend you from enemies, or even become tame if you feed them meat or mushrooms.

Sharpshooter (400 Rep)- For all that brutes and monsters have the run of the forest, the civilized man still has his greatest weapon to bring to bear against the slaving hordes. Wild men, beasts, even monsters; all can fall before a few well-placed shots from a pistol or rifle. You are an experienced user of firearms, with a steady hand and excellent trigger discipline that will help ensure that, even if you fire off shots in a panic, they'll still hit their target. You also know how to maintain and repair your weapons, as well as how to reload quickly. Just don't burn through your ammo too quickly; bullets don't grow on trees. Not yet, at least.

Mutation (400 Rep)- The majority of Plague victims have similar symptoms. Aggression, bodily growth, deformities, splitting headaches- and literal splitting headaches, in the cases where the Plague progresses to the point that a person becomes a Chomper- hallucinations, lowered mental capabilities, and more. However- there is another power at work in the forest, aside from the Plague. The sticky white goo that flows through the trees in the deepest parts of the forest has strange, shape-shifting properties. Stay in contact with it too long, and you might find a clone of yourself wandering around; leave some dead bodies lying in it, and they may just come back to life, stitched together into a Human Spider. Even hybrids can be created; chimerical combinations of man and beast like Banshees, Swampers, or the Wolfman.

Perhaps you were born from the white goo, or perhaps you were “reborn” due to coming into contact with it. In any case, you have gained a strange mutation of some kind. Perhaps you now have the head and body of a humanoid elk; or maybe your lower body is that of a massive earthworm, giving you the ability to dig quickly through the earth at the cost of your lower body becoming a hindrance in a fight. Simply making yourself stronger, faster, etc. isn’t an option with this; it’s more of a trade-off where you exchange human parts for animal ones. Fur may keep you warmer, but it won’t be more protective than that animal’s fur; you may possess pincers that can cut flesh, but using weapons may be an issue. As an alternative some people have had their own clothing melded into their skin rather than gaining animal features; forming a sort of armor at the cost of being unable to remove whatever they were wearing. A body sealed in a containment suit, a gas mask for a face, leathery skin from a leather jacket, even a head encased in a metal helmet. Just keep in mind that most of the people still living here look mostly human, and will probably have an adverse reaction to any overly bizarre appearances.

Vitality (400 Rep)- For all that skills and special abilities can help carry the day, sometimes you just need to be able to take a hit. And although the Plague may have given your body an increased ability to heal, that still won’t save you if you get torn apart before you get the chance. Although this may be less of a concern for you now, since it seems like your body has become much tougher than it should be- as if your skin was lightly armored, or perhaps covered with a protective suit of some sort. Your increased durability combined with your healing ability could even allow you to shrug off a few bullets, though trying to eat a full magazine from an assault rifle would be unwise.

+Adrenaline (200 Rep)- You can take damage, but how well can you dish it out? Quite well, as it appears. Perhaps the Plague has caused your muscles to swell in addition to hardening your skin, or maybe you can tap into hysterical strength better than most. Whatever the reason, you now hit like a truck in a melee. A few swings with an axe or shovel is more than enough for you to kill nearly anything in the Darkwoods; if you line things up just right, you could probably even decapitate a Swamper in one strike with a good enough axe.

Careful Step (400 Rep)- Traps are a useful means of defending yourself and your property here in the woods. They're also a death sentence if you stumble into one while running away from something big and gribbly. And naturally, the danger is even worse if you're the type that surrounds your house in traps- how ironic would it be to fall victim to your own defenses? So now, you simply do not trigger your own traps. You can jump up and down on your bear traps or even land mines and not worry about getting hurt from them. Furthermore, once a day when you step on a trap it simply won't activate in the same way. It might not seem like much, but it may just be a "get out of dying free" card in the right scenario.

+Chameleon (200 Rep)- You've learned that to avoid traps, you have to take things nice and slow. Luckily, that's also a good way to avoid the monsters and crazies here, too- even more so for you since your footsteps make less noise now. Old floorboards don't creak as loudly, sticks don't snap beneath your feet, etc. And furthermore, your body has gained a unique mutation; once a day, for about an hour, you and everything you are wearing/carrying close to your body will become translucent. Not quite invisible; you can be detected pretty easily if you move around due to the distortions your body makes. But if you stand still, then unless something happens to run into you you'll be nigh undetectable.

Handyman (400 Rep)- Like the mysterious Stranger, you seem to know your way around a workbench. An incredibly useful skill, here, since you're capable of taking scrap and turning it into anything from traps, to improvised weapons- even makeshift firearms- and even body armor, as well as having the know-how to create better tools to make even better versions of those other things. Your ability to repair damaged items is also top notch; everything from broken generators to shattered wardrobes can be fixed up with the right materials and some elbow grease. Naturally, this also extends to weapon maintenance as well; some wood and scrap metal is all you need to make a broken weapon as good as new again.

+Sturdier Construction (200 Rep)- As nice as being able to fix practically anything is, it's much better to not have it break in the first place. While not indestructible, the things you build tend to be much more durable than they should be. A barricade you built might last through the whole night rather than being broken down in a few hours, and even a board that you hammered nails into to give yourself something to swing would be capable of bashing in many a head before it needs to be replaced.

Inner Strength (Free Here, 500 Rep to Keep)- There's something calling people deeper into the woods. The road home is nothing more than the road to madness itself. But your strength of mind is too powerful to be fully swayed by such a thing. The source of this madness- it might as well be a god, for all the power it has over the people in the Darkwoods. But you, you could stand before the presence that dares to invade our planet, even place your hand on it, and still summon up the strength to turn away from its promises of warmth and comfort- as difficult as that might be after everything you have seen and done in these woods to survive.

ITEMS

YOU GET TWO FREE 100 REP ITEMS AND DISCOUNTS ON TWO 200 AND 400 REP ITEMS.

Scarecrow's Garb (Free)- Clothing taken from a scarecrow found in one of the old, dilapidated farm fields; a wide-brimmed straw hat, a coat with surprisingly deep pockets, a pair of pants, a belt and some old work boots. Probably won't scare away any Banshees but they're good, sturdy clothes. Also comes with a journal and pen.

Hideouts (Free Here, 200 Rep to Keep)- Four buildings, one in each "biome" found in the Darkwoods; the Dry Meadow, Silent Forest, Old Woods, and the Swamp. The remnants of Outsider bases, these more-or-less safe havens are equipped with ovens which vent protective gases throughout their interiors, warding off the influence of the forest which grows stronger at night. The ovens are also capable of extracting Essence from mushrooms and tainted sources of meat found in the forest; when enough of it has been collected, the Essence can be injected to invoke changes in one's body, along with strange hallucinations half of the time. They also have workbenches, which feature many of the tools and misc. odds and ends needed for crafting items- strangely, whenever you improve on these workbenches you'll also find that later workbenches- or even ones you've visited previously- will also have those improvements. Although the ovens are too complicated/ramshackle/important to improve safely, they increase in quality as you head deeper into the forest as a consequence of those facilities being deemed more important due to their proximity to the center of the woods. The improved ovens can cover a wider vicinity- useful, since the hideouts are larger (which is in itself a mixed blessing due to larger bases often having more points of entry) and allow you to extract more Essence from your mutated objects. If you pay to keep this then in future worlds abandoned, dilapidated, yet strangely well-equipped buildings will appear in the locations you go to, featuring equivalents to the workbench and oven when appropriate. **The fee to keep this item is waived in Gauntlet mode if you win.** It's your choice if you share space with the Stranger, or if you each have your own spaces- his behavior may become increasingly unpredictable, so both options have their advantages and disadvantages.

Pistol (100 Rep)- A pistol with an eight round magazine. Not the best weapon to be sure, but dumping all eight shots into something is usually enough to kill or at least severely injure it. Comes fully loaded and with two spare magazines.

Single Shot Shotgun (100 Rep)- A simple shotgun capable of accepting one shell at a time. Can be reloaded quickly, as a consequence of the low capacity, but it's still got enough kick to splatter most creatures with a shell or two at close range. Comes fully loaded (with one shot) with two extra shells.

Board with Nails (100 Rep)- A board that someone stuck nails to, and later modified with pipes and scrap metal to make it more akin to a medieval mace. A crude but effective weapon for early on, being light enough to swing at less nimble enemies but lacking the stopping power for more terrifying foes.

Sickle (100 Rep)- A modest farmer's tool, with a cutting edge that makes it a surprisingly effective weapon. Although it doesn't feature any additional modifications to increase its lethality yet, the fact that it was constructed before the Darkwoods came to be and meticulously maintained makes up for that. Hammer not included.

Knives (100 Rep)- A collection of sharpened kitchen knives, somehow perfectly weighted for throwing, numbering five in all. Like the Sickle they are of comparatively exceptional make, though have yet to be modified. The knives make an effective throwing weapon, though trying to go up against a monster with only one would be the height of suicidal foolishness.

Flashlight (100 Rep)- A standard civilian flashlight, good for illuminating the darkness and loaded with fresh batteries unlike most of the ones you can find which have lost their charge over the years. Battery problems aside, a flashlight is not only useful for traversing dark areas but also makes for an effective tool for spotting traps and Shiny Stones, which reflect its light.

Lantern (100 Rep)- A gas-fed lantern that can hang on a belt; arguably more useful than a flashlight, since it doesn't need to be held in one's hand, this lantern is good at illuminating the general area around you but can't be directed like a flashlight.

Watch (100 Rep)- A beautiful golden watch, which accurately tells the time. This might not seem like much, but being able to tell the time when you're exploring a building or cave can save your life; to say nothing of how the trees and weather can block out the light of day deeper into the forest.

Gasoline Can (100 Rep)- A red can of gasoline, capable of holding several liters, with a neat little bow wrapped around it. It can actually be found outside of your hideout every third morning during your stay here, fully topped off; a gift from a friend? In any case, it's a free can of fuel- valuable for keeping your generator running at night and for crafting- so it's best not to look a gift horse in the mouth. Post-Jump the gasoline found inside will never run out.

Box of Flares (100 Rep)- A cardboard box filled with flares; twenty of them in all. Although flares eventually go out and can't be relit, they are useful for exploring as a disposable light source which can be both held and dropped on the ground to illuminate an area. You will find a new box at each of your hideouts; Post-Jump, your Warehouse will have a special box which replenishes them as they are used.

Hunting Rifle (200 Rep)- A single shot hunting rifle, fully loaded for what it's worth. The most accurate ranged weapon in the forest, and a powerful one at that, but also the riskiest one if you fail to kill your quarry with your one shot and difficult to aim quickly if you get caught off guard. It has a bullet in the chamber and two more for you to use as you'd like.

Double Barrel Shotgun (200 Rep)- A double barreled shotgun. Two shells to the face is overkill for most creatures in the forest, even Swampers, but it never hurts to be prepared. Both barrels are loaded, and you have four more shells as well.

Shovel (200 Rep)- A workman's shovel, heavily modified in order to make it into a more effective weapon. The wooden shaft has been replaced with metal piping, making the heavy weapon a bit easier to swing, and the old shovel head has been replaced with a newer, sharper version, making it almost like a spear. It's also an effective tool for grave-robbing, if you don't mind doing such a thing.

Axe (200 Rep)- Although it doesn't have the same reach as the shovel, this modified axe is lighter and superior when it comes to raw damage. Like with the shovel the handle has been replaced with metal piping for easier swinging and the head has been replaced and sharpened, giving it a wicked edge for hacking off limbs, and the use of metal has made it more durable like the shovel as well..

Pitchfork (200 Rep)- A pitchfork that has, you guessed it, been modified to be lighter, sharper, and more durable. Has better reach than the shovel and is a slightly more deadly weapon, but it isn't as useful for breaking barricades or digging (up) graves. Still, if you want to make those sons of bitches pay you can't go wrong with this classic.

Military Flashlight (200 Rep)- A military flashlight that is much brighter than the civilian equivalent, and is also loaded with entirely fresh batteries that will make it last longer than if you used the batteries found in the forest. Though the brighter light will still drain power quickly, the military flashlight is unmatched when it comes to illuminating the darkness, and it can cut through the shadowy substance found in the swamp like a hot knife through butter.

Large Backpack (200 Rep)- A large backpack capable of holding many things. It has been patched up and had several extra pockets sewn onto it made of high quality fabric, making it incredibly good for trucking around large amounts of supplies. If you need to carry lost of things with you and can't use the services of the Bike Man, then this will definitely come in handy.

Wardrobe of Bear Traps (200 Rep)- A collection of bear traps tidily tucked away inside of a wardrobe, ten in all. Although it won't kill many things on its own, a bear trap is an invaluable tool for home defense, either giving you precious minutes to act, escape, or holding an enemy in place so that you can finish them off; they can also be broken down for scrap metal. A similarly stocked wardrobe can be found in each of your hideouts, and Post-Jump a wardrobe that replenishes bear traps as they are used can be found in your Warehouse.

Case of Molotov Cocktails (200 Rep)- An alcohol crate that carries Molotovs instead of liquor. These bottles are filled with a mixture of gasoline and moonshine, with the rags stuck into the bottle being lightly soaked with the latter making them incredibly flammable. Numbering six in all, Molotov Cocktails are excellent when you have the drop on something you want dead, and can make for decent emergency weapons against crowds. A new case can be found in each hideout you have, and Post-Jump the case will replenish Molotov Cocktails as they are used.

Assault Rifle (400 Rep)- One of the two best guns in the forest, the assault rifle was often used by Outsider soldiers though few of the weapons have survived into the present day. Firing in short bursts, it's easy to run through ammo quickly- but each magazine has enough bullets to mow down a horde of lesser enemies, and even two or three of the stronger ones. Comes fully loaded, with two spare magazines; this would be an incredibly valuable haul if you had just found it.

Pump Action Shotgun (400 Rep)- Arguably the strongest available firearm you can get in the region, this pump action shotgun comes fully loaded with eight rounds and can kill pretty much anything dead if you fire it from a close enough range. Comes with an additional eight shells, just in case you want to take on a whole den of Chompers or saw through a tree with buckshot or something like that.

Bike Bell (400 Rep)- A bell taken from a bike. Why is this so expensive, you may ask? Well, ringing it will call the Bike Man to your hideout. A middle-aged man with a large backpack, a bike, and an insatiable appetite for alcohol, he will be more than happy to truck the things you have stored away in your hideouts to and from each other, for however long or dangerous the trip may be, all for one measly bottle of moonshine. Although he won't be able to go to the swamp for obvious reasons, Post-Jump he will somehow be able to carry whatever you ask of him between whatever properties you have, taking only a day at most regardless of the distance. Just... don't expect all of your alcohol to arrive if some is among your possessions.

Embryo (400 Rep)- The larvae of some immense bug, and one of the purest forms of Essence that can be found in the Darkwoods- offering four times the amount than what you would get from a patch of mushrooms. It doesn't seem to decay, making it ideal to save it until the final hideout- that is, if Essence is what you're after. Eating this, as unappetizing as it may seem, will not only give your body a powerful regenerative effect for a few minutes; it'll also allow you to survive dying, once, with you waking up in your hideout covered in white fluid- a few items missing from your pockets, but a small price to pay for continuing your adventure. In Gauntlet mode, purchasing this item will also allow you to gain the same benefit from any other embryos that you find during your trial, allowing you to stock up on "extra lives" that will act as a safety net before you complete the Gauntlet. Post-Jump, you will get a new Embryo each Jump, even if you haven't used the "life" granted by the previous one.

Maps of the Forest (400 Rep)- A series of maps for each section of the forest; some are of the region before the Darkwoods sprouted up, and can perhaps be used to locate certain landmarks (assuming that they haven't been swallowed up by the trees or have been moved due to seismic activity), while others are hand-made maps that show important places- the villages, friendly vendors, and other well-known but dangerous locations. Furthermore the locations of several sashes, camps, and other minor locals have been jotted down; there's no telling if they're still there, or if they've already been ransacked, or if there's something nasty lurking nearby, but if nothing else they might be worth checking out to see what you can find. Post-Jump you will frequently find similarly annotated maps, showing interesting locations, secret ones, and more.

Protective Wear (400 Rep)- This is an unusual set of items to be sure, but it's definitely worth wearing some of them- maybe not all at once if you place fashion above protection though. The first is a gas mask, an MUA or "elephant" mask to be precise, so named because of the rubber tube it has that somewhat resembles an elephant's trunk. Although toxic gas isn't all that common, wearing this is still a good idea. It comes with several filters, each one lasting for several hours of continual use. The second item is a pair of sturdy rubber boots; although they don't look too impressive, they are actually pretty resistant to the toxic mushrooms once can find. The explosion might still jar you a bit, but the poison will most likely not be a problem. Lastly, there's a sort of sweater that someone has attached several bug shells to with rope- definitely the strangest item of the lot, but the thick wool combined with the sturdy shells make for some surprisingly effective armor.

Satchel of Shiny Stones (400 Rep)- A satchel full of Shiny Stones, ten of them in all. Shiny Stones are one of the closest things to currency that the forest has- in the sense that they aren't inherently useful to most people, but most people want them anyways which is where their value comes from. Uncommonly found scattered about as debris from the strange meteorological event that precipitated this whole nightmare, and more commonly used in the strange rituals of Savages and even the religious practices of the villagers, these Shiny Stones might not be the most valuable thing you can trade- but in such a large amount, they'll still allow you to afford one or two large purchases, or can fund a lot of smaller ones for a week or so. You will find a new satchel at each hideout you visit, and Post-Jump you will receive a new satchel each week. Hopefully by then you'll have found a better use for them if you haven't already.

Crate of Crafting Materials (400 Rep)- A crate filled with all sorts of useful items used in crafting. Planks and scrap metal, a box of a hundred nails, tape, rope, several bundles of rags, bottles of alcohol, a canister of gasoline, matchsticks, sturdy fabric, metal piping, and a tool box to round it all out. The whole lot could fetch a pretty penny, but would probably be far more useful in the hands of a skilled craftsman. Each hideout you visit here will be similarly equipped, and Post-Jump you will get a crate filled with endless amounts of these items in your Warehouse.

Box of Bullets (400 Rep)- An ammo box filled with ammunition, of all things. Two handgun magazines, two assault rifle magazines, ten shells for a shotgun, and ten medium-caliber bullets fit for a hunting rifle. As you might have guessed you will find a box of bullets like this in each hideout. Post-Jump the ammo box found in your Warehouse will have endless amounts of ammunition for all of your weapons.

Doctor's Bag (400 Rep)- A doctor's bag used to transport medical supplies. This one features much of what you might expect in a doctor's bag; sterile surgical tools, thread for making stitches, bandages, alcohol for sterilizing tools, painkillers and other pills for various ailments. This one also has several antidotes, which can be used to cure poisonings from the mushrooms found here, as well as some canned or otherwise preserved food- chicken eggs, potatoes, salted and cooked pork, and loaves of fresh, hearty bread. If that doesn't make sense, well, just consider it comfort food good for one's mental health. Each hideout you visit will have a stocked bag like this one, and Post-Jump you will find a bag in your Warehouse with infinite amounts of these goods.

Flamethrower (500 Rep)- A military flamethrower that uses gasoline as "ammunition". I don't think I have to explain why this is useful. Shooting flames over a dozen feet away, the flamethrower literally melts through most anything that has the misfortune to cross your path. It's probably a poor idea to use it inside of your hideout- or in anywhere other than an open field, really- but if you need to burn it down burn it down burn it down burn it down burn it down BURN IT then this is certainly a great weapon of choice. Post-Jump you will find that it never runs out of gas.



COMPANIONS

Companion Import/Recruitment (100 Rep)- Want to bring some of your old friends into the woods, or maybe you'd rather bring some people from here with you? It would certainly make securing a hideout much easier, though strength in numbers might end up attracting more attention. In any case, 100 Rep will allow you to import or create two companions with 800 Rep of their own to spend on Perks and Items. You may also choose to recruit a canon character- such as the Stranger, Wolfman, Night Trader, or Mushroom Granny- for the same price. *You will get the opportunity to import or recruit people later on if you are in Gauntlet mode.*

Orphaned Musician (100 Rep)- A little orphan boy that was in your hideout when you first woke up here, playing a piano in one of the rooms. He can't be much older than eight, but he plays like a prodigy and seems to be quite adept at traversing the forest, somehow bringing his piano with him whenever you move to a new hideout. Also, he seems to be good at catching rats, which he'll give to you; they like many of the animals here have Essence inside of them. The boy himself is a picky eater, preferring uncontaminated food whenever it is available, though.

Wild Woman (100 Rep)- A savage woman with sticks and mud in her blonde hair, skin turned pale from the Plague. Half-naked, she is a savage but uncoordinated fighter with her staff- really just a length of wood she picked up somewhere. You're not sure why she's following you around, but at least she isn't throwing rocks at you or beating her head against trees like a lot of the savages here tend to do. Communication may be difficult since she primarily "speaks" in grunts and growls, but she does seem to know a lot about surviving in the forest despite her inability to articulate what she knows. Like most of her kind she likes to eat mushrooms, wood, and mutated flesh when she can get her hands on it.

Blood-Sucking Merchant (200 Rep)- The first morning after you arrive you will wake up to find a tall, scarfed man wearing a trench coat and sun glasses at your door. It bulges unnaturally, suggesting the appearance of something on his back, and the downward tilt of his head even if you are taller than him suggest that he's hiding something on his face. Still, he's surprisingly polite compared to most people here- even gentlemanly- offering to sell you goods and telling you about his camp where he can be found during the day. If you visit him, you might be in for a shock when you discover him eating his favorite food- human blood, sourced from a dead savage which made the unwise decision to attack him. It seems that his body was merged with a mosquito, giving him chitin over parts of his body, wings (too weak to fly with unfortunately) and a proboscis which dangles from his mouth in place of a tongue. He'll cover up quickly, embarrassed that you "caught him with his pants down" so to speak, but if you don't seem to mind he'll be overjoyed at the relatively good reception, moving his camp closer to your hideout so that you can have easier access to his inventory- and so he can claim the bodies of any savages you end up killing during the night. For his part, he seems to be a good shot with the hunting rifle he carries on his back and he seems to have a knack for finding good salvage.

Banshee? (200 Rep)- At first glance, you might believe that this woman is a Banshee; an easy mistake to make, considering the uncannily realistic mask that she wears resembling one, as well as the mechanical “wings” she’s constructed to wear on her arms to further the illusion. Living in a barn somewhere, she has a highly unusual story; one night, after hearing a large number of crows outside of her dwelling, she discovered a Banshee nest had been constructed on front porch with the mother nowhere in sight. Taking up the fetus that had been left inside of it, she carefully moved the nest into her home and took care of it as best she could. Miraculously, it survived and grew up- and even more miraculously, it didn’t turn on her. And then a savage attacked her, the Banshee retaliating by setting itself on fire and unleashing its young, who quickly took the intruder to pieces... and leaving the woman with several young Banshees to take care of. You can probably see where this is going; needless to say, the woman continued raising the Banshee chicks (infants?), with her “children” protecting her and her home in turn. Despite her appearance she’s actually pretty normal, and the two of you hit it off rather quickly. She gives you eggs (she raises a few chickens too) and strange lumps of flesh (“stillbirths” according to her) when you come to visit her. And at night, you may occasionally hear the sound of a Banshee’s scream followed by the alarmed yelping of savages, dogs, and other creatures as they are swarmed by squawking chicks...

Savage Chieftain (300 Rep)- Another savage, only this one seems to be quite a bit more intelligent than the one from earlier. For one thing, while he’s still non-verbal he knows how to dress himself- wearing a patchwork collection of animal hides, with a helmet made from an elk’s skull hiding part of his face. He also has a much deeper knowledge of the forest, skulking through the trees with his axe in hand. As quiet as he is normally he goes into a berserk rage in a fight, swinging madly as he advances fearlessly, only retreating when the situation is truly dire. He also seems to command the respect of some of the other savages, since occasionally you’ll find him leading groups of them to kill rival groups and creatures near your hideout. Eats wood, mushrooms, meat- anything edible he can get his hands on, really.

Swamp Mechanic (300 Rep)- Hybrids of man and beast are not unheard of in the Darkwoods, though they are rare. This woman would usually make her home in the swamp, where she has a house boat near one of the more peculiar terrain features there- a great lake where it constantly rains, concealing the source of the storm at its center. If you ask her how she got here, in the Dry Meadow, she’ll tell you that she swam through an underground passage which unfortunately closed up while she was on the search for good scrap and other parts. As for how THAT’S possible- she appears to be some sort of hybrid of human and frog. The exact nature of her mutation is up to you, but it gives her the ability to dive underwater for much longer than a human could, without equipment, as well as other frog-like traits like an elastic tongue and webbed digits. A skilled mechanic, she can help you fix damaged items or build new ones cheaper and better than you could on your own: in particular, she specializes in water-proofing. Likes eating bugs, particularly the large ones- she’ll happily take care of any home infestations your hideout gets.

Familiar Friend (400 Rep)- An oddly familiar person, for all that their outfit conceals their face and body. They do not speak, but communicate with you by writing with a bit of charcoal they have tucked away in one of their many pockets and bags. Meeting you in your hideout one morning, they are quick to offer you some gifts: a full canister of gas for one, but also some components that you might use to make a melee weapon or a gun; whichever you prefer. From there they'll make sure to visit you every morning to trade, often giving you freebies including some more valuable items once you've made your way deeper into the Darkwoods. Their inventory often consists of things you would find interesting, or that you might be in need of. Overall, they're just a friendly, weirdly nostalgic person who seems to have your best interests at heart. The only thing you could reasonably complain about, aside from their muteness, is the strange white goo that they sometimes leave on the floor after their visits...



ENDING

So, you've reached the end of your journeys here, either by surviving ten years or completing whatever goal you choose for the Gauntlet. If you did the later we'll see about your rewards in a moment, but first you have a choice to make. If you died, and weren't doing this Jump as a Gauntlet, you head home. If not, you have the standard choices of staying here, going on to the next Jump, or ending your Chain and returning back to your home world. In any case the effects of any drawbacks will disappear.

Now that that's out of the way: take the amount of Rep you earned from Drawbacks and divide by 100. That's how many Shiny Stones (SS) you can spend in the next section; note that you do not have to "save" Rep to get Shiny Stones, you can spend your Rep normally and still get the same amount. If you purchased Vocal, ignore it for the purposes of calculating how many Shiny Stones you have. Also, if you took less than 10 Shiny Stones worth of drawbacks, round up to 10 Shiny Stones. You may not have challenged yourself as much as you could have, but making your way to one of the endings without your powers is still worthy of reward.



REWARDS

Reputation Gift (0 SS)- You can only take this option if you took less than 1000 Reputation worth of drawbacks; this gives you the difference in Reputation so that you can spend at least 1000 Rep in this document. For example, if you took 700 Rep worth of drawbacks, the Reputation Gift will be worth 300 Rep.

Victory Lap (0 SS)- You've completed your goals, but perhaps there is something more that you want to do in this world- something you could only do with your powers intact maybe, like cleaning up the forest without necessarily burning it and everyone who lives inside of it to the ground? If you'd like, you can choose to spend ten years in this world; the effects of any drawbacks will still disappear, as usual. If you somehow manage to die during this time, you'll also get to continue on your merry way- the humiliation of dying with all your powers intact after completing the Gauntlet is punishment enough.

Companion Import/Recruitment (0/1 SS)- This is basically the exact same thing as the option found in the actual companion section, only it's free to import or create new companions, as well as to recruit canon characters. If you pay a Shiny Stone, you may also recruit someone who might have perished during your time here, or even before that time; useful if you made some regrettable decisions or experienced unforeseen consequences for some of your actions.

Shiny Stone to Reputation Conversion (2 SS)- Does nothing here interest you? Or maybe you'd rather just buy something you couldn't quite afford earlier; well, by taking this option you can convert your Shiny Stones into Reputation at a ratio of 2:100. If that doesn't seem like a lot, just remember that you already got Reputation from those drawbacks the first time around.

Mementos (1 SS)- Perhaps you would like to have some mementos from your time spent here in the Darkwoods, as troublesome as the memories may be. An electronic hand-held game featuring a wolf. A violin. A warm, hand-knit sweater. A model of the solar system, built out of melted plastic and held up with wires. A box of children's drawings. Any number of sentimental keepsakes that will, hopefully, bring to mind good memories.

The Sow (1 SS)- The massive, mutated pig that is the lifeblood of the villagers found in the Silent Forest. An elephantine beast that gives birth to numerous young at a time, it can best be described as a pig crossed with a spider, its flailing limbs too weak to hold it up... at least, they might have been. Now the Sow can stand, loping around on all its limbs at a, frankly, terrifying speed. Will you ride it into battle? Feed it your enemies? Use it as an endless supply of bacon? The Sow shows an unusual loyalty to you now, loyalty that it never even showed the farmer who raised it.

Mushroom Planter (1 SS)- This planter, instead of holding something like flowers, instead grows a variety of mushrooms. Poisonous white mushrooms; usable red ones; even ones that are luminescent, glowing in the darkness. You can use these samples to grow even more mushrooms somewhere else, or just keep them around as another souvenir from your time in the Darkwoods.

+Mushroom Glade (4 SS)- There's no reason to settle for a mere planter when the bounty of the forest can grow far beyond that. This door, located in your Warehouse, will lead to an idyllic forest glade filled with the above varieties of mushrooms. There's paths to walk on and even a babbling brook with a bridge going over it, making for a relaxing place to visit and harvest mushrooms from- one that starkly contrasts with the woods you were just in, granted.

Night Invasion Simulator (3 SS)- Another door in your Warehouse, this one leading to a recreation of one of your hideouts from the Darkwoods. Which one will depend on how much of a challenge you want, for once you enter you will quickly see the sun starting to set from outside one of the windows- as well as feeling your powers start to drain away. Using the supplies found in the workbench, you will have to quickly fortify this hideout to the best of your abilities, using the provided weapons to defend yourself until morning comes. Don't worry about dying; failing will simply boot you out of the door, none the worse for wear. Aside from the chance to hone your unpowered fighting skills, there's one more benefit to doing this: although you won't be able to take any of the supplies with you when you leave, you're more than welcome to harvest meat or anything else from your attackers, or even just dump their carcasses in your Warehouse for whatever purpose you have in mind.

Secrets of the Swamp (5 SS)- The Swamp, being the closest part of the Darkwoods to the source of the infection, has a few oddities to it not found anywhere else. Glares- red balls of light that cause one to bleed from the eyes when they are in your line of vision- are one. The other is "shadow armor", a strange substance which coats certain objects and creatures and is nigh indestructible to conventional means of attack; only disappearing when light is applied to it. You have gained the ability to replicate both of these phenomena in yourself, though not at the same time for obvious reasons. When in a dark environment you can rapidly grow the shadow armor from your body; covering yourself in the strange, smoky substance. On the other hand, you can also make your body glow with the light of a Glare, which will make it painful to look at you- though by virtue of producing light, this will rapidly destroy your shadow armor and prevent you from making more until you stop glowing.

Chomper Transformation (5 SS)- A Chomper is a victim of the Plague who has progressed to the final stage; after a period of dormancy, the victim wakes up one final time before their head splits in half down their chest, turning them into a Chomper. Somehow, you can invoke a similar transformation in your body, giving you a disturbing form of attack with your razor sharp teeth while being able to revert the changes at any time. Somehow, you can see, think, etc. in this state.

Banshee's Cry (5 SS)- Purchasing this option will give you an alt-form based off of one of the strangest creatures you can find in the Darkwoods; the Banshee. With a few differences, given their suicidal life-cycle; you still have the humanoid/bird-hybrid body, as well as the scream that can disrupt nearby electronics. When people make eye contact with you, the image of your face will be projected into their mind's eye, disorienting them. But, when you immolate yourself, instead of dying your perspective will shift into one of your "offspring" while your "brethren" appear alongside you. You'll grow up much more rapidly compared to your "siblings", growing back to your true age in a few days.

Lurker of the Swamps (5 SS)- Another alt-form, this one for the Swamper; a creature that looks like a cross between a lizard and a man, or perhaps a Chomper. One of the hardest hitting monsters found here, it's blisteringly fast on land and in the water, where it can hold its breath for hours if necessary. In addition to its powerful claw swipes, it can also spit a mass of grasping vines to ensnare its prey.

Master of Vermin (5 SS)- The last of the alternate forms, this one being based off of the Centipede. A Centipede is a gigantic version of its namesake, as long as a human is tall, which is capable of somehow taking over a dead human body- replacing the head and one of the arms with a large pincer. It's also somehow capable of creating a large pincer from the abdomen of its host, giving it an additional surprise attack. They are also, somehow, capable of burrowing through the earth at incredible speeds, crossing several dozen feet in a matter of seconds. Although it doesn't really make sense, if you'd like you can choose to have a generic dead body as a part of this alt-form to start with- though there's nothing stopping you from abandoning it for greener pastures.

Piotrek's Rocket Ship (5 SS)- Although this rocket-shaped thing created from old tractor parts would normally be a metal death trap it seems as if it has, somehow, been converted into an actual functioning space ship, complete with space suit for moon walks on planets without oxygen. The space suit appears to have been made from an old wetsuit, duct tape, vacuum tubing, and a fish bowl. Like everything else, it's probably best not to question it.

Advanced Oven (10 SS)- This oven resembles the ones found in the hideouts, but it's clearly far more advanced when you look at its various components. Not only does it have the possible use of continuing your Essence treatments if you haven't maxed yourself out during your stay here- being four times as efficient as the oven found in the Swamp- but it also eliminates any of the bad side-effects that you might have otherwise picked up from doing so. But that's the least of what it can do. By processing other sources of infection, corruption, etc. you can empower yourself with the Essences of those things, taking on traits that are reminiscent of it the infection/corruption as a whole. While this may come with some unpleasant side-effects, unless you have some way of preventing or removing them, the majority of the changes you experience will be beneficial to you in some way.

The Being (20 SS)– The true source of the Darkwood. In 1975 a meteor brought the Being to Earth, where it soon took hold in the earth– spreading the white substance throughout the valley it landed in, forming roots which continued to grow throughout the soil, cloning themselves. That they appear tree-like is misleading; if anything, the Being is more similar to a mushroom than a tree. To give an idea of how much it has spread, only 15% of the trees found in the Darkwood are “real”; the rest are merely clones created as a result of the Being’s growth. This same substance is what gave life to many of the monsters– and some of the people– found in the Darkwood. The Wolfman is the clone of a hunter who lived in the Old Woods, fused together with one of his old hunting trophies. The Mushroom Granny is a copy of an old woman who died after crawling into the woods in search of her family members. Even the Night Trader is a replica of the Stranger, created while the man was tied to a tree; his helmet is a part of him, for while the Being can duplicate the appearance of inanimate objects it doesn’t differentiate them from living beings. It was even able to broadcast radio signals, albeit spotty ones, by taking over an old radio tower. The motives of the Being– if any– are difficult to comprehend. It often takes the appearance of a young baby when it decides to create images of itself in the dreams and hallucinations of those infected with the Plague, and in some ways it appears that some aspects of its growth are unintentional– seen in the growth of the Talking Tree, which blocks one of the two avenues through which it is possible to reach the Being. On the other hand, when it does communicate through indirect means like dreams, hallucinations, or radio waves it does seem to have some awareness of what is happening, even asking questions. In any case, one thing that is known for certain is that it calls those infected with the Plague to it; making them wish to “return home”. Once they find themselves in the valley where the Being resides, most quickly succumb to a deep sleep and slowly waste away until they expire, a process which may take an untold amount of time due to the effects of the Plague. What benefit it receives from this is not known, if there even is one, but the people who come to rest beside it often have happy, peaceful expressions on their faces. Its control may be psychic in nature, due to the nature of its hallucinations sometimes showing the past of other people, or it might just be that the pathogens exert extraordinary mental effects upon others.

In any case, you have a choice to make. The Being, if you ever even encountered it, has been placed into your hands: now with the size and appearance of an actual baby instead of the monolithic creature it once was. You can either...

Adopt the Baby: ...take the nascent extra-terrestrial under your care. Something that is sure to come as a surprise if you burnt it down, though it will quickly forgive you. Maybe it just wanted a friend– or perhaps it was looking for its mother? Either option would explain its behavior; in any case, the Being will become a companion, following you between worlds. Whether you actually treat it as a child or decide to exploit it somehow– running experiments on it, treating it as a biological weapon, or such– is up to you. Your other option is to...

EAT THE BABY

Whether the Being knew it or not it created the perfect ecosystem for those with a “survival of the fittest” mindset, like the Wolfman and, perhaps, yourself. Whether you actually devour the Being whole or merely cook it down into the purest form of Essence available, the result is the same: you absorb much of its power, becoming an entity similar to the Being in the process. By planting yourself in the ground you can essentially become a Genius Loci, taking over huge swathes of land very quickly as you spread your Essence throughout the earth. Although many of these processes are autonomous- like breathing- in time you may even learn to direct them intentionally, allowing for the deliberate duplication of people, buildings, objects, and more, as well as the hybridization of them. You will also get your own version of the Plague, which can not only induce mundane symptoms like insomnia, shakes, and paralysis, but also startling physical changes in about the same extremity as the transformation into a Chomper- as well as the ability to influence those you have infected, either through the disease itself or through some psychic connection that it creates in them. The speed with which your substance/influence can spread is rapid to start with, covering a few dozen miles in any direction- but after that point it tapers off considerably, spreading much more slowly. To put it simply- everything that you saw in Darkwood is something that you may potentially recreate somewhere else.

NOTES

-YJ_Anon

-Depending on which route you choose to go through in Gauntlet mode your Body Mod's Wings (or any Wings you might have gained with the Mutation perk) may be reduced in effectiveness to provide a challenge. If you choose to go through the Escape route, they will only be capable of gliding and short flights, low to the ground so that you can't fly above the treeline. This is, of course, because one could simply load up on drawbacks and then immediately fly over the wall of trees surrounding the Darkwoods and end the Gauntlet a few minutes after it started. If you choose the Survival route, then your Wings will be fully effective- however, the condition where you have to survive one-hundred days in the Darkwoods remains. You could theoretically fly over the walls in search of supplies, but if you do any time spent outside won't count towards completing the Gauntlet- and it's also important to note that doing that is dangerous, considering the attitudes of the outside world towards the people trapped in the Darkwoods. If you choose to Discover the Source then your wings will also work normally; the Source appears to be located underground, or at least under such heavy tree cover that simply flying to it is impossible, so your Wings won't provide a huge advantage other than a bird's eye view of the landscape- with the side-effect of broadcasting your general location to anything looking up at the sky at the time, even if it's just Piotrek.

-For the perks with multiple tiers, you can use the discounts/freebies on both tiers. For example you could use both 100 Rep freebies to pick up Eagle Eye and Third Eye, and/or you could discount Handyman and Sturdier Construction with the 400 and 200 Rep discounts respectively. However you can't use more than one freebie or discount on the same perk, such as by discounting Handyman to 200, then 100, and then making it free; you can only discount it to 100.

-The Being's influence over you isn't absolute; even when standing directly next to it, the Stranger (the protagonist of the game) was able to pull away from it. Thus it can be resisted even in Gauntlet mode. This is represented by the Inner Strength perk being free here, since the Being is really the only thing that we know of which it would apply to.